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Accelerationism, Prometheanism and Mythotechnesis

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In a previous meditation on accelerationism – in relation to a modality of art practice that I gave the name (following Sun Ra and Mike Kelly) myth-science – I attempted to get to grips with the concept of hyperstition, and, more particularly, with the mythos of Nick Land.[1] Myth-science, in that essay, was defined as the production of alternative fictions and the calling forth of a different kind of subjectivity attendant on this.[2] Here, in the second part of my enquiry, beginning with a commentary on two essays by two more recent accelerationist thinkers – Reza Negarestani and Ray Brassier (both of whom were inspired by Land) – I want to move from myth-science to a concept of 'mythotechnesis', when this is again defined as a 'fictioning' of reality, but also as a form of libidinal engineering involving the construction of what David Burrows and I call patheme-matheme assemblages.[3] Just as an attempt was made in my previous essay to differentiate myth-science from hyperstition per se, so, here, I attempt to differentiate mythotechnesis from an overly rational (and technological) Prometheanism, whilst also learning from the latter (mythotechnesis might be understood as a form of aesthetics after finitude in this last sense).[4]

1. Accelerationism (and the Inhuman)

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[1] See 'Accelerationism, Hyperstition and Myth-Science', in Tim Matts, Ben Noys and Dane Sutherland (eds.), *Accelerationism and the Occult,* New York, Punctum Books, 2015.

[2] In terms of Sun Ra see Kodwo Eshun's discussion, 'Synthesizing the Ominiverse', in *More Brilliant than the Sun: Adventures in Sonic Fiction,* London, Quartet, 1998, pp. 154-163). Mike Kelley, in an essay on Olaf Fahlstrom ('Myth Science', in *Oyvind Fahlstrom: The Installations*, Ostfildern, Hatje Cantz, 1995, pp. 19-27) links the term more particularly to an expanded contemporary art practice.

[3] Both Negarestani and Brassier themselves point to their indebtedness to Land. The former in a footnote to the essay 'Drafting the Inhuman: Conjectures on Capitalism and Organic Necrocracy', in Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek and Graham Harman (eds.) *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism*, Melbourne, re.press, 2011, pp. 182-201; the latter in the 'Inroduction', written with Robin Mackay, to Nick Land, *Fanged Noumena: Collected Writings 1987-2007*, Falmouth, Urbanomic, 2013, pp. 1-54.

[4] What follows draws on and develops some of the arguments first sketched out in my review essay (of *#Accelerate: The Accelerationist Reader*) 'The Missing Subject of Accelerationism', *Mute*, available at: www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/missing-subject-accelerationism (accessed 14 August 2015). In that essay the term 'myth-science' was used to describe the practices and productions that in the present article come under the heading 'mythotechnesis').

I began my previous essay by looking to the proposals for an accelerationist aesthetics made by Alex Williams (one of the co-authors of the 'Manifesto for an Accelerationist Politics') in his essay 'Escape Velocities', and to the idea that, as well as hyperstition, this aesthetics might take the form of 'processes of epistemic conceptual navigation'.[5] Williams names Negarestani as the key figure in the development of this philosophical but also – for Williams – aesthetic project. I want to return to this particular proposal as a way in to Negarestani's own take on accelerationism:

> The spatialized conception of the navigation and ramification of conceptual spaces at the core of Negarestani's notion of epistemic acceleration has an immediately aesthetic dimension, a highly visualized approach, grounded in the mathematics of topos theory. This abstract mathematical aesthetic of gesture, navigation, limitropism, and pathway-finding reroutes the philosophy of mathematics away from a basis in set theory and logic, and instead seeks an ultimately geometric ground.[6]

In fact, Williams' fourth proposal also connects with Negarestani's outline for a renewed Prometheanism, naming, as it does, a more design-orientated programme to run alongside the strictly philosophical. Again, it is worth quoting:

> Finally, we have the aesthetic of action in complex systems. What must be coupled to complex systems analysis and modeling is a new form of action: improvisatory and capable of executing a design through a practice which works with the contingencies it discovers only in the course of its acting. This can be best described through the Ancient Greek concept of *metis*, a particular mode of cunning craft.[7]

The first question I want to ask is whether these two forms of aesthetics (very broadly construed) – conceptual navigation and a pragmatic *metis* – have a place in art practice, especially one conceived of as a libidinal engineering that might operate against what Gilles Deleuze, following William Burroughs, once called 'control' (and more specifically the production of a normative and standardized subjectivity that is attendant on this). I am also interested in what might be left out of this particular aesthetic (if, indeed, it can be called as such) – that is to say, the limits of philosophical accelerationism when it comes to art practice and the production of subjectivity.

Certainly Negarestani's key accelerationist essay – 'The Labour of the Inhuman' – is orientated against a reified idea – or image – of the human that, for Negarestani, can

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[5] Alex Williams, 'Escape Velocities', *E-Flux*, no. 46, 2013, p. 9.
[6] Williams, 'Escape Velocities', p. 9.
[7] Williams, 'Escape Velocities', p. 9-10.

restrict the possibilities of thought, and, indeed, of politics more generally (the 'human' as control we might say).[8] In fact, it is within a 'kitsch Marxism' that Negarestani sees this particular yoke (the 'consumption of norms') at play, and, in this, his essay harks back to Nick Land's notion of a broadly Left 'Cathedral' as that which places a break on the Promethean impulse.[9] Negarestani's essay is not, however, antihuman (the labour of the inhuman is defined against the antihumanist refusal to revise and construct), but, rather, involves a continuation or 'extended elaboration' (precisely, an acceleration) of the humanist project itself.[10]

This is to attend to an inhuman impulse that is, as it were, 'within' the human, when the former names the commitment to an on-going experimental but also rational process – of conceptual navigation – and the latter names the fetters on this (the 'folk' (everyday and common-sensical) sense of a human self – or 'myth of the given' – that can limit this other adventure insofar as it relies on pre-existing categories and definitions). The labour of the inhuman then involves the continuing interrogation of the category of the human, a program of endless revision and updating that is itself a commitment to always reassess previous commitments. This, we might say, is the human's self-overcoming through reason, albeit of a specifically experimental and speculative type.[11]

In fact, for Negarestani, the human (as a kind of processual project) is defined by reason, and more particularly, by the relation between seeing and doing (inferences and actions) and the task of giving and asking for reasons. This manifests itself most obviously in a shared language and common vocabulary (alongside other 'discursive practices') and it is this 'communal seeing and doing' that defines the labour of the inhuman as a collective, indeed, Universalist project (as well as marking the difference between sapience and sentience).

Although the case for a labour of the inhuman is compelling, we might note a first caveat in relation to the emphasis on language and discourse, insofar as the opposition Negarestani draws between 'stabilised communication through concepts' and 'chaotically unstable types of response and communication', that itself leads to a

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[8] Reza Negarestani, 'The Labour of the Inhuman' in Robin Mackay and Armen Avanessian (eds.), *#Accelerate: The Accelerationist Reader*, Falmouth, Urbanomic, pp. 427-66 (referred to in text as LI).

[9] See my discussion of Land and Neoreaction – or NRx – in the essay mentioned in footnote 1.

[10] Francois Laruelle, in his focus on reclaiming and foregrounding a 'generic' humanity has something in common with Negarestani's labour of the inhuman in this sense, although, it has to be said, the non-philosophical project *per se* orientates itself against any philosophical Mastery – and with that a strictly philosophical definition of the human.

[11] We might note the connections with Alain Badiou here and his proposal that a subject, as opposed to a human, is animated by a certain fidelity, or 'idea', that 'raises' them above the creaturely.

certain definition of the human and the privileging of the discursive, leaves out other forms of thought that might be said to operate between, or even outside of, these poles (LI, pp. 431-2). Indeed, it seems clear that art practice, for example, tacks between these two, if, indeed, its logics could be said to be staked out by them at all. Certainly questions of aesthetics – and, crucially, of affect – are left aside in this particular labour, but, more generally, there is also the question, following Felix Guattari, of a-signifying semiotics and other forms of expression that do not operate on a discursive register (or not exclusively). These other, often complex semiotics (what Deleuze and Guattari call becomings) somewhat complicate the definition of the human as solely a rational animal.

For Negarestani, however, to dispense with – or even underplay – discursive practices in particular and the 'space of reason' more generally means 'everything lapses either toward the individual or toward a noumenal alterity where a contentless plurality without any demand or duty can be effortlessly maintained' (LI, p. 434). Although this is to effectively dismiss practices outside of the space of reason, it is also clear that these discursive practices – and indeed reason itself – are, for Negarestani, not to be thought of in terms of the habitual and typical (to rely on already existing concepts and categories in this sense would be to promote an antihumanism). As such, although Negarestani implicitly positions himself against a thinker like Henri Bergson (and, by extension, any vitalist ontology) it might equally be claimed that a form of intuition – or what we might call a thinking outside of ourselves – is at stake in these non-reasonable operations of reason. [12]

For Negarestani the labour of 'seeing and doing' implies an interventionist attitude to systems and the mobilisation of atypical forms of thought ('synthetic forms of inference'). This constant updating of one's commitments (which, again, involves a re-vision of the category of the human itself) cannot but be experimental – guided by 'complex heuristics' that in themselves produce new frontiers of action and understanding. A system that does not intervene and interrogate its own norms of understanding and action – again, does not renew its commitments – is irrelevant at best and obstructive at worse to this other fundamentally constructive and affirmative project.

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[12] Bergson, no doubt, is who Negarestani, Brassier and others have in mind when they contrast the private thinker-mystic – and idea of intuition – to a rule based and reasonable sapience that grounds a collective 'us'. The question here is whether Bergsonian intuition, or indeed Deleuze-Guattarian becomings, are private and individualistic in this sense, or whether they are an instance of the world thinking through us – or, more simply, a connection between 'us' and the world. I attend further to this – in relation to Deleuze and Guattari's concept of becoming – in my 'Memories of a Deleuzian: To Think is Always to Follow the Witches Flight', Henry Somers-Hall, Jeff Bell and James Williams (eds.), *A Thousand Plateaus and Philosophy*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2016.

In terms of aesthetics, and following my brief comment about intuition above, a key question is what the more speculative types of reason, and 'abductive inference', might 'look' like (especially as the labour of the inhuman itself accelerates ever further beyond familiar categories and concepts). Could it be, in fact, that it is within art practice that we see complex sets of heuristics (some of which are not conceptual) at work? Certainly art is involved in 'manipulable, experimental, and synthetic forms of inference whose consequences are not simply dictated by premises or initial conditions' (LI, p. 436). Indeed, in many ways, this kind of experimental pragmatics – *metis* – seems a pretty good definition of artistic practice.[13] Negarestani gives a footnote here on abductive inference that is worth quoting at length:

> Abductive inference, or abduction, was first expounded by Charles Sanders Peirce as a form of creative guessing or hypothetical inference which uses a multimodal and synthetic form of reasoning to dynamically expand its capacities. While abductive inference is divided into different types, all are non-monotonic, dynamic, and non-formal. They also involve construction and manipulation, the deployment of complex heuristic strategies, and non-explanatory forms of hypothesis generation. Abductive reasoning is an essential part of the logic of discovery, epistemic encounters with anomalies and dynamic systems, creative experimentation, and action and understanding in situations where both material resources and epistemic cues are limited or should be kept to a minimum. (LI, p. 436, footnote 7)

Might we make a further claim that these abductive inferences, and especially 'non-explanatory forms of hypothesis generation' are similar to what I have elsewhere called fictioning? [14] This involves an experimental (but also lived) modelling of different realities that proceeds through imagining and imaging, performing and

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[13] In relation to this Negarestani does turn to contemporary art in his essay on Jean-Luc Moulène, *Torture Concrete: Jean-Luc Moulène and the Protocol of Abstraction*, New York, Sequence Press, 2014. Here the labour of the inhuman becomes the labour of abstraction when this names a similar project of turning away from reified images of thought (especially, here, those that rely on notions of interiority and exteriority) and, indeed, a continuous and experimental redefinition of the latter (involving 'bootstrapping' from the local to the global). Art itself is positioned as one mode of thought amongst others in this sense – a diversification which fosters novelty and exploration and, as such, serves to redefine the unity of all modes of thought. In relation to art practice per se Negarestani also lays out a compelling case for the reciprocal determination of thought on matter/matter on thought, itself 'led' by the positioning of 'generative points' that destabilize pre-existing images and habits. It is here that he also outlines an idea of knots – between the mathematical and the libidinal for example – as a preeminent example of this abstraction (and which, as such, have something in common with my own outline of patheme-matheme assemblages) (see also footnote 27 below on Moulène's idea of the protocol).

[14] See my essay 'Deleuze Against Control: from Fictioning to Myth-Science, *Theory Culture Society* (forthcoming).

making, alongside more speculative reasoning (and, in this last sense, art practice itself often has a conceptual aspect to it). Certainly this kind of art practice involves the suspension of dominant habits of thought, operates outside of pre-existing frameworks and protocols, questions accepted 'realities' and so forth – as well as, crucially, producing something that is of one but not of one at the same time. There is a kind of politics implied here: in a situation in which options are increasingly limited (a veritable hemming in of subjectivity by neoliberalism), these forms of fictioning – again, the production of a different reality – become crucial and in and of themselves politically charged.

In Part 2 of Negarestani's essay the experimental labour of the inhuman is portrayed as more specifically navigational, and, indeed, one might say, more restricted – or, at least, more rigorous and focussed in its unfolding:

> Interaction with the rational system of commitments follows a navigational paradigm in which the ramifications of an initial commitment must be compulsively elaborated and navigated in order for this commitment to make sense as an undertaking. It is the examination of the rational fallout of making a commitment, the unpacking of its far-reaching consequences, and the treating of these ramifications as paths to be explored that shapes commitment to humanity as a navigational project. Here navigation is not only a survey of a landscape whose full scope is not given; it is also an exercise in the non-monotonic procedures of steering, plotting out routes, suspending navigational preconceptions, rejecting or resolving incompatible commitments, exploring the space of possibilities, and understanding each path as a hypothesis leading to new paths or a lack thereof – transits as well as obstructions. (LI, pp. 443-4)

As Williams remarks this is a highly visual (and, again, compelling) account of the adventure of reason – abstracted from any specific content and understood as a specifically geometric project (in another essay Negarestani defines geometry as 'the controlled organization of space as a precondition for the articulation of the unarticulated and the extraction of intelligibility').[15] The routes and pathways are themselves the hypotheses, with the labour of the inhuman becoming a form of experimental cartography. That said, despite the focus on experimentation, there is still a certain normativity at play here insofar as this navigation involves the positing and unpacking of consequences for humanity per se. Thought might be untied from a specific telos, but it is, nevertheless, directed toward the immanent 'evolution' of the human. If art practice is also involved in these forms of navigation – again, an experimental cartography that is both conceptual *and* affective – it seems to me that this is not always in the service of any ethics in this sense. If art practice is a labour, it is one untethered from the human (or, indeed, the inhuman).

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[15] Reza Negarestani, *Torture Concrete*, p. 17.

For Negarestani this conceptual navigation involves a positive feedback loop effectuated by the deracinating of any origin or fixed definition of the human insofar as new definitions – inhumanism – feed back to inform the very idea of the human. As Negarestani remarks: 'As soon as you commit to human, you effectively start erasing its canonical portrait backwards from the future' (LI, p. 446)). This revisioning and updating is the movement of reason itself, its autonomous self-actualisation through the superseding of any previous idea of what it 'is' (and, in this sense, as Negarestani says, his project must be seen in the tradition of Enlightenment thinking). We might note a further connection with Nick Land here, insofar as the labour of the inhuman shares with teleoplexy (the time loops of hyperstition) both a certain autonomous and self-evaluating character, as well as a strange temporality: it retroactively operates back on the past/present from a future it has helped construct (not least in the feeding back of the consequences of its understandings and actions into its own self-definition).

The self-actualisation of reason (which turns out to be the real labour of the inhuman) involves the bootstrapping of more complex functions from simple ones.[16] Reason's self-assemblage as it were which, in itself, ultimately involves the augmentation of any given reality (hence the Prometheanism). But reality (including the reality of a life) is not simply a construct of reason. Or, to put this another way: reason might well outstrip the human (understood as a particular psycho-biological platform), but the human (as complex psycho-biological entity) outstrips reason. In terms of any Prometheanism, this is not to instate a border between the given and the made exactly (more on this below), but it is to say that the made must involve other procedures and materials beyond the conceptual. We might make the case here that the augmentation of reality by the conceptual and technological, but also the affective and fictional is the raison d'être of art practice, at least post Duchamp.

It is at this point that we get one of the most compelling parts of Negarestani's essay which describes this process of construction and revision (and the heuristics mentioned above) as an 'engineering epistemology' in which attention is given to the different levels and hierarchies of any given system (with 'lower level entities' operating as guidance and enhancement of upper levels, and the latter reciprocally operating back down to correct and 'renormalise' so as to allow further construction and exploration) (LI, pp. 460-1). Negarestani suggests the compelling idea of an engineering loop between these different levels – and, as such, the labour of the inhuman is also to draw a map of syntheses that 'ensures a form of descriptive plasticity and prescriptive versatility' (LI, p. 463). Again, could it be that art practice is also involved in this kind of a 'patchwork structure', as Negarestani calls it – of belief and action – and, in particular, that it involves its own engineering loops between different levels albeit these must be seen as affective as well as conceptual

[16] Negarestani is clear, however, that this self-actualization needs must be accompanied by communal assessment and methodological collectivity; that is, by a politics.

(the mapping out of a Spinozist – molecular – unconscious in this sense, or a microphysics of force as Nietzsche might have it).[17]

In this revisionary programme the figure of the engineer becomes the key conceptual personae (in place of the 'advocate of transgression or militant communitarian') and liberation becomes a work of construction – a labour – that amounts to an '*unlearning* of slavery' (LI, pp. 464-5). '*Freedom is intelligence'* as Negarestani puts it (LI, p. 465). In passing, we might note Michel Foucault's late work on technologies of the self here, and, more specifically, Foucault's remarks about the 'Care of the Self' in which the decision by the subject to self-apply certain ethical codes brings about a

[17] In an earlier essay – 'Globe of Revolution: An Afterthought on Geophilosophical Realism', *Identities: Journal of Politics, Gender and Culture*, vol. 8, no. 2, 2011, pp. 25-54 – Negarestani writes about these navigational loops in terms of different syntheses between the local and the global, or, more specifically, between a local horizon (man, the earth, and so forth) and the 'open universal continuum' out of which they have been cut. Here the trauma of excision defines us as individuated beings, but also points to the possibility of other pathways to the open besides those that position the latter as an 'unbindable exorbitance'. Indeed, man himself is made up of these nested 'traumata' (that go back to the inorganic) and the role of the revolutionary subject, for Negarestani, is to connect them together, to 'bring about all types of eccentric neighbourhoods between regional horizons of the universal continuum and establish topological transfer between seemingly discrete regional domains' (Reza Negarestani, 'Globe of Revolution', p. 38). It is in this sense that the revolutionary work of what Negarestani also calls the 'Modern Man' has something in common with the labour of the inhuman insofar as it involves a kind of construction that is attendant on an 'unrestricted synthetic vision' and the drawing of a geophilosophical navigational map (Negarestani's thesis on geotrauma has something in common with Deleuze and Guattari's own writings on geophilosophy in this last sense – but it also resonates with Badiou's theory of the subject insofar as the Modern Man is defined by his particular relation to the open (trauma operates in a similar fashion to the event)). Negarestani's essay is concerned with different types of syntheses, diagnosing an exogenic response to the outside (resulting in a terrestrial myopia), whilst also calling for '*alternative* modes of openness'. As he remarks: 'the responsibility of the revolutionary subject is to adopt and grow these germs [defined earlier as: 'asymptopic behaviours, neighbourhoods, overlaps and universal passages between regional fields'] as alternative modes of openness' (Reza Negarestani, 'Globe of Revolution', p. 52). Might we make the case that these alternative modes of openness, by definition, cannot be restricted to one domain of thought – and that, as such, they will include other work besides the conceptual (certainly Negarestsani's comments about how the counter-revolutionary is defined 'by their reactionary and restricted attitude against alternatives, their dismissal of tactical improvisation and unwritten plans, and their fear of asymmetrical fields of synthesis or relation to the open' would imply an openness to this idea (Reza Negarestani, 'Globe of Revolution', p. 35). It seems to me that the accessing of ever deeper nested trauma (understood as points of passage to the open) cannot but involve practices that are, as it were, atypical and non habitual – and that these needs must involve attention to the affective insofar this is the very register of trauma, at least on and in the human subject.

kind of space of freedom.[18] For Foucault, however, these practices are as much a-signifying and affective as they are conceptual and discursive – although in both cases – Foucault and Negarestani – it is a kind of autonomous decision making that, ultimately, defines freedom.

The artist has certainly often been positioned as a transgressor – as outside (or against) 'the' system – just as more activist-artists have been positioned as critics of the same. Negarestani suggests a third way: the working within a system that is itself dynamic and progressive. Could we understand the artist as engineer in this sense? On one level, to return to Foucault, this is an injunction to treat life as experimental matter, as a 'work of art' to be produced. On another it might mean the construction of artefacts that augment life, though not necessarily in a overly technologically determined manner. It might also be a combination of these two: the libidinal engineering of new and different forms of synthetic life. I will return to this – and develop some of my other comments on Negarestani's important text (especially around the absence of the affective) – in the final section of this essay.

2. Prometheanism (contra Finitude)

Like Negarestani, Ray Brassier's philosophical Prometheanism – as laid out in his own accelerationist essay, 'Prometheanism and its Critics' – identifies a constructive and future-orientated impulse within the human, one that is, again, rule-based and rational and that, ultimately, might be pitched against all-too-human preoccupations

[18] See, for example, Foucault's *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the College de France 1981-82*, F. Gros (ed.), trans. G. Burchell, London, Palgrave, 2005. Interestingly, Nick Srnicek and Alex William's 'Manifesto for an Accelerationist Politics', in Robin Mackay and Armen Avanessian (eds.), *#Accelerate: The Accelerationist Reader*, Falmouth, Urbanomic, 2015, pp. 349-378 – which lays out a Promethean politics in parallel with Negarestani's philosophy – makes some cryptic remarks regarding the need for 'self mastery' that might be said to resonate with Foucault's Care of the Self: 'We need to posit a collectively controlled legitimate vertical authority in addition to distributed forms of sociality' (Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams, 'Manifesto', p. 358). For a more detailed account of the Care of the Self – in relation to the production of subjectivity and Lacan's Ethics of Psychoanalysis, see Chapter 2, 'The Care of the Self versus the Ethics of Desire: Two Diagrams of the Production of Subjectivity (and of the Subject's Relation to Truth) (Foucault versus Lacan)', of my *On the Production of Subjectivity: Five Diagrams of the Finite-Infinite Relation*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, pp. 59-88. It is worth pointing out that the idea of freedom that Foucault outlines – the product of a certain work on the self by the self – has resonances with Negarestani's own definition of freedom as a work of the human, albeit, again, for the latter it is a specifically rule based – rational – work: 'Rather than liberation, the condition of freedom is a piecewise structural and functional accumulation and refinement that takes shape as a project of self-cultivation' (LI, p. 464).

such as finitude.[19] For Brassier the category of finitude also includes birth and suffering – which, along with death, are typically portrayed as essential and existential givens – limits as it were – that define us *as* human (Brassier has Heidegger and his followers in mind). Brassier's argument is that the positing of an existential authenticity of the given (as in the 'human', 'life', *Dasein* or what have you) *against* the made means that Prometheanism (simply, for Brassier, the idea that we can (re)make ourselves and our world without limits) is ruled out *tout court* or seen as a sin (involving, as it does the heresy of making, or attempting to make, the given).

In fact, in a recourse to Hegel, Brassier suggests that this Prometheanism, with its introduction of a disequilibrium into the world, is also the 'enabling condition of cognitive processes' in general insofar as the latter cannot but involve opposition (understanding) in tandem with conciliation (reason) (PC, p. 470). Prometheanism is not an attempt to heal any subject-object division, but is precisely enabled by it. Alienation begets freedom in this sense.

Brassier's particular take on finitude, and specifically his implicit idea of what suffering might be, could be fine-tuned somewhat insofar as from a certain perspective it is not suffering itself that is the given but, impermanence which, when encountered by a subject desiring permanence, causes suffering as a secondary effect (this is the fundamental insight of Buddhism). The possibility of a state of subjectivity that does not rail against impermanence (does not desire permanence), in particular one that does not identify itself as a separate self (and thus does not suffer in this sense), but instead 'identifies' with the world in general (and its impermanence) – or perhaps does not identify at all – might be said to be gestured towards by Brassier in what he tantalizingly calls a 'subjectivism without selfhood' (although, no doubt for Brassier such a state is to be rationally and scientifically produced rather than through any meditative practice) (PC, p. 471). Brassier's Prometheanism might be said to involve the promise of an existence beyond finitude (an infinite subject perhaps?) in this sense.

Indeed, for Brassier, finitude is less the determining factor of any given subjectivity per se than, again, a fetter on the Promethean impulse itself (this desire to go beyond finitude is a refrain of accelerationism in more or less all its articulations). As with Negarestani there is then both a critique of the human (again, as folk or 'manifest image' and thus as fetter), and an affirmation of it (as sapient rational being (as 'scientific image')) and, as such, potentially unbounded.

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[19] Ray Brassier, 'Prometheanism and its Critics', in Robin Mackay and Armen Avanessian (eds.), *#Accelerate: The Accelerationist Reader*, Falmouth, Urbanomic, 2015, pp. 469-87 (referred to in text as PC).

We might note a specifically technological variant of this contemporary Prometheanism in Benedict Singleton's writings (including his own essay in *#Accelerate: The Accelerationist Reader*), in the impulse to escape planetary gravity and thus the ultimate 'prison': earth.[20] Hence, also, the accelerationist interest in the Russian cosmists (and the inclusion in the aforementioned Reader of 'The Common Task' by Nicolai Fedorov).[21] As Robin Mackay and Armen Avanessian's 'Introduction' to the same Reader suggests, Singleton's interest in the technological 'platforms' that capitalism produces, and the concomitant navigational spaces opened up by them, parallels Negarestani and Brassier's own projects of conceptual navigation (Singleton was also the first to deploy the concept of *metis* in relation to the latter).[22]

In passing we might also briefly quote a contemporary anti-Promethean thinker so as to sharpen the differences. Here is Simon Critchley from the very beginning of his relatively recent *The Faith of the Faithless*:

> Our culture is endlessly beset with Promethean myths of the overcoming of the human condition, whether through the fantasy of artificial intelligence, contemporary delusions about robotics, cloning and genetic manipulation or simply though cryogenics and cosmetic surgery. We seem to have enormous difficulty in accepting our limitedness, our finiteness, and this failure is a cause of much tragedy.[23]

For Critchley the human tragedy is not finitude, but precisely the wilful denial of it. Indeed, finitude, in Critchley's account, defines authentic human existence and experience. Such a position, according to Brassier, maintains a structure of transcendence in relation to the human, implying (when not simply asserting) that there is a difference in kind between the latter and other forms of life (it also, crucially, implies that finitude – and suffering – is meaningful). Following Heidegger (and Kant) this is an ontological difference that implies that we can never wholly

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[20] Benedict Singleton, 'Maximum Jailbreak', in Robin Mackay and Armen Avanessian (eds.), *#Accelerate: The Accelerationist Reader*, Falmouth: Urbanomic, pp. 491-507.

[21] Nicolai Fedorov, 'The Common Task' in Robin Mackay and Armen Avanessian (eds.), *#Accelerate: The Accelerationist Reader*, Falmouth, Urbanomic, pp. 85-90. We might note here a figure important to the accelerationist aspects of *Anti-Oedipus* and one similarly interested in leaving the planet: William Burroughs. For the latter such an escape, however, was to be achieved not through the latest technological prosthesis (at least as presented by NASA) but by various aesthetic practices involving time-space disruptions: the cut-up, dream-machine and so forth (thanks to David Burrows for this point)).

[22] Robin Mackay and Armen Avanessian, 'Inroduction', in Robin Mackay and Armen Avanessian (eds.), *#Accelerate: The Accelerationist Reader*, Falmouth, Urbanomic, pp. 32-3.

[23] Simon Critchley, *The Faith of the Faithless: Experiments in Political Theology*, London, Verso, 2012, p. 1. I want to thank Nicole Denham for alerting me to this explicitly *non*-accelerationist character of Critchley's writings.

know ourselves (or 'jump on our own shadow' as Brassier puts it) (PC, p. 476). Or, at least, if we do objectivate ourselves – make ourselves into an object of knowledge (a particularly complex machine) – then we risk losing something essential about our humanness (and, indeed, risk losing any position from which to maintain an 'ought' or other normative principles).[24]

This anti-Promethean philiosophical attitude might be summed up with the idea that man cannot be understood as merely a 'catalogue of empirical properties', and that there is also a fragile equilibrium between the made and the given that ought to be respected (or, more simply, the idea that the world was made at all) (PC, p. 477). Brassier's audacity (which gives his essay its striking quality) is simply to question this ought, this idea of a given equilibrium (or, again, the idea that the world was made at all), and thus to 'free' the Promethean impulse itself and with it the potential of the human (who, in this sense, does not have a defining limit; Brassier's Prometheanism, as he remarks, refuses the ontologization of finitude) (PC, p. 478).

It seems to me that art practice, at least of a kind, is also Promethean in this sense insofar as it refuses a certain kind of finitude (one thinks, again, of Duchamp and his 'explorations' beyond typical space-time) but also other limits more generally (one thinks of the very movement of the avant-garde that specifically refuses any predetermined parameters or logics of what art is). Indeed, art practice also interferes in the equilibrium of the world – its fictions disrupt the normal run of things, or, philosophically speaking, its representations and simulations undo truth claims. On the other hand it must also be remarked that art is often the name for practices concerned with finitude (with mortality and so forth), and, more generally, cannot but concern itself with finite materials (it is a concrete rather than abstract practice in this sense). Art, as Félix Guattari once suggested, is necessarily a practice of the finite, but one that opens towards the infinite.

That said, clearly, art is not simply or narrowly technological – it does not produce anything 'useful' in this sense, but operates in a different paradigm (to reference Guattari once more, we might say an ethico-aesthetic paradigm as opposed to a techno-scientific one). If art practice has its own Promethean impulse this is not necessarily to further human evolution (even when this moves beyond the human per se) – or, indeed, to further the progress of reason. It is less teleologically driven it seems to me (at least, since the end of a certain kind of Modernism), involved in its own experimental constructions that draw as much on past resources as contemporary

[24] We might note here that Negarestani's labour of the inhuman, insofar as it involves a commitment, proceeds from an ought, one that arises from an idea that there is a difference of the human *qua* reason. On the one hand then Negarestani provides an ethics, in Spinoza's sense, to Brassier's colder empirical work – but, on the other, Negarestani might be accused, from Brassier's perspective, of smuggling in a difference in kind – an ontologization of the human? – under the cover of reason itself.

and future-orientated ones. Indeed it is often this mobilization of what Raymond Williams once called the residual (alongside more emergent culture) that gives certain art practices their peculiar traction and political efficacy in the world (after all, the past (as well as the future) can be mobilized as a powerful resource against the impasses of the present).[25] In fact, the present is never simply homogenous, temporally speaking, but involves a heteorogeneity of times (Raymond Williams' writings provide a useful mapping of this complexity). This complex make up of the contemporary can sometimes be occluded in the accelerationist pre-occupation with the future.

As with Negarestani, the Promethean project is expounded in Brassier's essay as ultimately the desire to 're-engineer' the human itself (and, in this, as Brassier remarks, the project is again the direct successor to Enlightenment thought and practice, as most obvious in the pre-eminent Promethean thinker of modern times: Marx). In part this involves a refusal of transcendence and, instead, a kind of tracking of immanence via rule governed activity. To quote Brassier:

> …rather than trying to preserve the theological equilibrium between the made and the given, which is to say, between immanence and transcendence, the challenge for rationality consists in grasping the stratification of immanence, together with the involution of structures within the natural order through which rules can arise out of physical patterns. According to this conception of rationality, rules are means of coordinating and subsuming heterogeneous phenomena, but means that are themselves historically mutable. (PC, p. 486)

We might ask here where this leaves a pursuit like art practice? Is it a rule-governed activity in this sense? More broadly we might ask (once again) whether art can be understood as producing any rational knowledge, even in the minimal sense of rule-governed behaviour? When it comes to art it seems to me that it might be better to replace this particular concept of rules (concerned with 'coordinating and subsuming heterogeneous phenomena') with a concept of rules that are more like protocols for experimentation.[26] Rules as a means of 'going on' in practice.[27] Indeed, art practice

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[25] I will be attending to this in a further essay on 'Myth-Science as Residual Culture and Magical Thinking' – which, in part, will involve an encounter between Williams' temporal mapping and Gilbert Simondon's work on phase-shifts (the emergence of technicity from an originary magical mode of existence – and the latter's contemporary analogue in aesthetics).

[26] Negarestani has something similar in mind when he writes about Moulène's practice in relation to 'protocols of cruelty':

> What Moulène calls 'protocol' when describing his *modus operandi* in making art is a performative system or germ of procedurality. It is a thought-manual furnished with materially influenced behaviours and evolving logics of operation. It is called protocol insofar as it governs the artist's conduct according to entanglements between (normative) laws of thought, (representational) laws of imagination and (dynamic-

here is like a move in a game for which the precise rules, in fact, are unknown – or are made up as the 'game' progresses. This might, for example, involve the production of fictions within fictions (and so on). Ultimately this is to produce a kind of density, even an opacity, built up by this nesting of one set of fictions in another. Art, when it is a practice, can constitute its own world in this sense.

Brassier suggests that it might be Alain Badiou who opens the way for a continuing of this Promethean project in relation to the subject (albeit Badiou's account of the subject and event would need to be linked, for Brassier, to 'an analysis of the biological, economic, and historical processes that condition rational subjectivation' (PC, p. 487)). In a sense Badiou is indeed the template insofar as philosophy, for Badiou, is not itself involved in the production of the subject (as opposed to art, politics and science), but, rather, is a reflection on these processes. Likewise, Brassier's philosophy is really a meditation on science as Promethean – rather than itself a form of Promethean practice – although, certainly, a different kind of scientific image of the subject is at stake in Brassier's work.

In 'The View from Nowhere', Brassier turns his attention more explicitly to this other mode or form of life – the nemocentric subject (a subjectivism without self) – that might be produced through the advanced operations of reason as it is manifested in neuroscience (this being a subject (if that is still a useful term) that shuttles between the folk and scientific image of the human).[28] The account of this future non-self agent – 'a physical entity gripped by concepts: a bridge between two reasons, a function implemented by causal processes but distinct from them' – is compelling (as

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> natural) material laws. To follow protocol is to be prepared to change one's approach in accordance with how interactions of matter and thought develop and how the space of abstraction is reorganized and diversified. In other words, the protocol offers new choices of disequilibrium for the entanglement between thought, imagination and material (Reza Negarestani, '*Torture Concrete*', p. 9).

In Brassier's terms Negarestani's definition of protocol is Promethean insofar as it involves the inroduction of a productive disequilibrium into the world.

[27] Brassier is certainly not oblivious to this idea that an experimental practice requires protocols – rules – even if these are to do with what to avoid or negate. See for example his earlier essay 'Genre is Obsolete', *Multitudes*, no. 28, 2007, available at: http://www.multitudes.net/Genre-is-Obsolete/ (accessed 13th August 2015) that considers 'Noise' performances and practitioners in this respect. That said, for Brassier, 'Noise', when it is 'successful', is less about aesthetics or affect (or, indeed, 'experience') than about producing a certain cognitive dissonance and negation of genre (a 'generic anomaly' as Brassier puts it). Brassier links this in his essay to some developments in neuroscience – and thus, we might say, the essay gestures to more recent work (such as the essay in the footnote immediately below).

[28] Ray Brassier, 'The View from Nowhere', *Identities: Journal of Politics, Gender and Culture*, vol. 8, no. 2, 2011, pp. 7-23.

is the critique of phenomenology), but is it not also the case that the rational (and communist) Promethean project – especially as manifest in science – needs must be married with a more affective – libidinal – type of engineering (that deals with desire), and would it not be this kind of encounter and experimental conjunction that really produces a radically different kind of subject?

And what about the theme of fictioning in all this? Would these new forms of life need new kinds of fiction (different kinds of narrative and/or image as cohering devices) – or, perhaps, it is in fiction itself (rather than philosophy) that we might actually find blueprints and prototypes of these new forms. Science Fiction is clearly an important resource in this respect. Indeed, towards the end of 'Prometheanism and its Critics' Brassier himself turns to J. G. Ballard for future-evidence of this new kind of human who, as it were, both engenders and is engendered by the Promethean project. Ballard's protagonists live a Prometheanism that is far from comfortable, or, indeed predictable ('the psychic and cognitive transformations undergone by Ballard's protagonists are nothing if not savage and violent' (PC, p. 486)). In fact, these characters – could we call them Brassier's conceptual personae? – are also libidinal figures (Ballard's novels track this other alien, often inorganic sexuality). They are inventions, experimental configurations of reason and affect given proper names – forms of synthetic life that might be gestured towards in philosophy, but are given life in art.[29]

3. Mythotechnesis (as Patheme-Matheme)

In a short commentary on the 'Manifesto for Accelerationist Politics' Antonio Negri lends his support to a renewed accelerationism, but also gestures to certain caveats such as the overly technologically determined nature of the thesis, and to certain key omissions such as a consideration of the commons and questions to do with the production of subjectivity, including 'the agonistic use of passions'.[30] For myself,

[29] Ballard's books are, precisely, of the imagination in this sense. In fact, ultimately, for Brassier, the imagination has a part to play in Prometheanism, which cannot but have a phantasmagoric aspect (albeit one that might be diagnosed, analysed and, presumably, 'cured'): 'Prometheanism promises an overcoming of the opposition between reason and imagination: reason is fuelled by imagination, but it can also remake the limits of imagination' (PC, p. 487).

[30] Antonio Negri, 'Some Reflections on the ♯Accelerate Manifesto', in Robin Mackay and Armen Avanessian (eds.), *♯Accelerate: The Accelerationist Reader*, Falmouth, Urbanomic, pp. 365-378. There is also Patricia Reed's critical commentary, 'Seven Prescriptions for Accelerationism', in Robin Mackay and Armen Avanessian (eds.), *♯Accelerate: The Accelerationist Reader*, Falmouth, Urbanomic, pp. 523-536, which points to a number of possible variations and further accelerations of the Manifesto, perhaps, most interestingly (at least in the context of this essay) the call to 'fictionalize'. For Reed this is tied to the production of a new *demos*, or new collective will and, more generally to the role of belief within any radical politics. In relation to my own take on accelerationism, Reed also points to

following on from my commentaries above, this last theme is perhaps the most crucial missing aspect of accelerationism (and, indeed, of any aesthetics that leads from this) at least as the latter is presented in the essays by Negarestani and Brassier or, indeed, in the Manifesto which might be said to be a political instantiation of the philosophical work. Indeed, more often than not the focus of recent accelerationism is specifically not the affective make up of subjectivity – with claims, rather, about the latter's obsolescence, especially in the wake of the 'rise of the machines', the foregrounding of only the rational subject, or, as in the Manifesto, the offering of no detail on this crucial area beyond a passing swipe at 'affective self-valorization'.[31]

In relation to an explicit politics, this non-engagement with the affective complexities of life means accelerationism offers only a partial picture of the issues and problems at hand – and, indeed, of their possible solutions. For capitalism is not just an abstract inhuman agency 'out there', instantiated in forms of technology, and so forth (that is, as a supra-molar entity). It is also 'in here' – producing our very subjectivity on what we might call a molecular level. Capitalism goes all the way down, determining our affective states, as well as our very desires, dreams and the contours of our innermost worlds. Subjectivity, then, is not solely a rational business in this sense or, at least, those aspects not involved in the project of reason are also crucial to our sense of who and what we are – or, indeed, what we might become.

Any subjectivity 'beyond' capitalism (even one produced from within the latter) will have to deal with this, and, indeed, get involved in the whole complex mess of being alive, not least addressing the various affective tonalities that capitalism engenders (from an omnipresent ambient anxiety, to resentment and depression, to all out paralysing fear). It will not be enough to take on – or commit to – a new set of ideas, or put our faith solely in technological progress, subjectivity has to be produced differently at this level. This is not to say that giving attention to this area is the most important aspect of any ethico-political project today, but it is to say that without an account of (and experimentation with) the affective production of subjectivity (very broadly construed), any diagnosis of the problems produced in and by capitalism, or strategy to deal with them (including a renewed Prometheanism), remains too abstract (or, remains abstract in only a partial way).[32]

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the need both to attend to the 'distribution of affect' in any accelerationist agenda ('in equal partnership with calls for operational, technological and epistemic restructuration') and to the more Guattarian idea of a 'commitment to an eccentric future' (although it is not entirely clear what Reed has in mind here) (Patricia Reed, 'Seven Prescriptions', p. 528 and 527).

[31] Nick Srnicek and Alex William, 'Manifesto', p. 351.

[32] To a certain extent all this is also the business of schizoanalysis especially as Guattari understood it – as a form of expanded analysis and accompanying experimental technology of the subject (involving non-human encounters as well as other models of and for a non-typical (and non-standard) subjectivity). I go into more detail on this in the section on 'Mapping the Diagonal: on the Production of Subjectivity' of my review mentioned in footnote 4 where I suggest that Guattari's writings might offer the missing framework for thinking a post-

It is important to note that this does not imply the reinstatement of a phenomenological self that experiences the world (an individual that *has* the affects) nor, a straightforward vitalism that is pitched against a colder abstraction. Affects – or becomings – are themselves abstract. They take the subject out of themselves – or they involve the irruption of something different – non-human – within the subject (when 'human' names a very particular historical configuration and self model). Indeed, molecular encounters – that might well involve the biological and chemical in conjunction with the technological and digital – produce unforeseen compounds that themselves are generative of other forms of thought and, indeed, themselves determine what thinking itself might become.[33]

It is here where the conceptual meets these other kinds of thought (defined in its broadest possible sense) that we might then find a role for art practice understood as also a technology of the inhuman (the production of something that does not – as Jean-Francois Lyotard once put it – offer a reassuring image to and of a subjectivity already in place). But also as a practice that attends to, and experiments with, the different registers of subjectivity, including, crucially (but *not* exclusively), the affective. Here art's ability to produce that which was previously unseen and unheard, untimely images and other forms that 'speak' back to us – as if they came from an elsewhere – is especially important and, again, takes on a political character (the imaging/imagining of alternatives). These other, perhaps stranger, image-worlds and fictions are an address not to us, but to something within us (or, to the collectivity that we are 'behind' any standardized molar identity).[34]

Besides the essay by Alex Williams with which I began this text (itself part of a special *e-flux* issue on 'Accelerationist Aesthetics') – and the inclusion of an extract from Shulamith Firestone's *The Dialectics of Sex* in *#Accelerate: the Accelerationist Reader* – there is little to be found in core accelerationist texts that significantly addresses the issue of aesthetic production itself, and even with Firestone the latter is seen as something to be overcome as technology renders the utopian imaging of art redundant.[35] In fact, it seems to me, accelerationism does not really have a place for

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capitalist subjectivity (in this regard see especially Guattari's 'The New Aesthetic Paradigm', in *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm*, trans. Paul Bains and Julian Pefanis, Sydney, Power Publications, 1995, pp. 98-118).

[33] Deleuze writes well on these new kinds of compound, or folds, in the appendix of his book on *Foucault*, trans. Sean Hand, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1988, pp.124-32.

[34] In relation to this idea of art's inhospitableness to the already constituted subject (but that nevertheless offers something) see my 'Art Practice as Fictioning (or, myth-science)', *diakron*, no. 1, 2014, available at: http://www.diakron.dk (accessed 13 August 2015).

[35] There is, however, an increasing amount of essays and publications on aesthetics and Speculative Realism – some of which, such as the anthology on *Speculative Aesthetics* (Robin Mackay, Luke Pendrell and James Trafford (eds.), Falmouth, Urbanomic 2014), contain

art practice, tending to position it as secondary – at best a forerunner to the real business of technological development, a poor cousin to philosophy.

But art practice – especially today, and more generally since the expanded field of the 1960s (if not post Duchamp) – is more than just this folk image. Indeed, as I suggested above, it involves its own experiments and navigational strategies that parallel the rational and technological and even, in some respects (in terms of the production of images and fictions) outrun it. It is also with art, or with aesthetic productions more generally, that we see real attempts at libidinal engineering – again, forms of synthetic life. These more expanded and performative practices can involve the kind of conjunctions I also gestured to above: non-human becomings (animal, plant … molecular) alongside, for example, other experiments in and with digitally produced sound and image and, indeed, with what has become known as a 'post-media aesthetics' in general. This is to say nothing of practices that might involve even stranger conjunctions between man and machine, especially around biology, coding and algorithms – or, to return to some of my comments above, practices that might utilize the residual alongside the emergent (or even pre-emergent). In these kinds of 'performative fictions' desire is invested and mobilised in a manner rarely encountered within more narrowly focused conceptual work. Might we reiterate the claim I made earlier in this essay that art practice in this sense is itself Promethean (precisely, artifice)?

In this respect I am very much in agreement with Patricia Reed's critical commentary that ends the *The Accelerationist Reader*, and which takes the 'Manifesto for an Accelerationist Politics' to task for, amongst other things, not attending to the constructive project of imagining alternatives (to 'eccentricate' as Reed puts it), and also, in fact, to the editors' own call (towards the end of their 'Introduction') for 'new science-fictional practices, if not necessarily in literary form'.[36] Although, in the 'Introduction' the claim is made that the more recent accelerationist treatises are a response to a situation in which the polemics and experiments of a 1990s cyberculture have been blunted, then assimilated, in web 2.0 and the general algorithmic character of social media (and, indeed, that these essays are intended as a mapping out of something more conceptual as a corrective to that other more aesthetic scene), nevertheless it remains the case that something has been lost in the sole focus on the

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writing directly related to an accelerationist agenda (indeed, the latter volume contains a contribution by Brassier amongst others, that ends with this intriguing reflection:

> …perhaps it's not so much a question of pitting the conceptual against the aesthetic, or concepts against affects, but of developing a conception of aesthetics which is not exclusively governed by either: one dedicated to reconstructing sensation on the basis of new modes of conceptualization. A Promethean constructivism will engineer new domains of experience, and it is these new domains that will need to be mapped by a reconfigured aesthetics (Ray Brassier, 'Prometheanism and Real Abstraction', p77).

[36] Patricia Reed, 'Seven Prescriptions', p. 37

rational (even when, as with Brassier and Negarestani, this might involve more speculative kinds of reason and also imply a kind of human/inhuman subject). In fact, once again, my suspicion is that this omission is also apparent to the editors of the Reader themselves. Why else end the 'Introduction' – after an account of how a machine-produced 'transformative anthropology' requires a newly thought rational subject – with the claim, entirely correct in my opinion, that this latter subject will also need to be a vitalist one?[37]

Elsewhere David Burrows and I have attempted to map out some of this terrain analytically, in terms of patheme-matheme assemblages, where the former names the formal (or we might say vertical) character of subjectivity, and the latter names an equally abstract – though in a different sense – more vitalist, 'creaturely' and affective character (something more horizontal).[38] The reader will recognize both Lacan and Guattari here, and, indeed, our intention was to produce a transversality between the two – to metamodelize (to use Guattari's phrase) these two analysts. This experimental diagramming – when it is drawn out, but also performed – is also, it seems to me, a kind of schizoanalysis. Or, in fact – and following Francois Laruelle – a non-schizoanalysis (it uses the tools and models of schizoanalysis but not necessarily for therapeutic aims).

In terms of the Lacanian matheme we might suggest a resonance with certain aspects of accelerationism, especially that of Negarestani and Brassier, insofar as, in Lacan's terms, the matheme is a kind of inhuman – again, formal – parasite on its animal host. Indeed, the matheme, especially as it is later developed and deployed by Badiou, is that which renders the human animal subject. In terms of the patheme, once again, it seems to me that this is the missing subject of more recent accelerationist texts. But it is also worth noting that certain pre-cursors to accelerationism had a pathic aspect – or, again, an affective charge, as I suggested in this essay's companion piece – on hyperstition and Nick Land.[39]

I mentioned Badiou above and, in fact, it seems to me that he – rather than Deleuze-Guattari – is a key progenitor of the inhumanism of recent accelerationism insofar as Badiou is also explicitly not interested in the affective make up of subjectivity (and,

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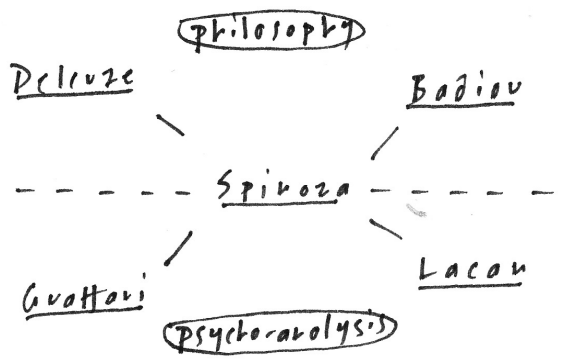
[37] Mackay and Avanessian, 'Introduction', p. 46.

[38] See 'S/Z or Art as Non-Schizoanalysis', in Ian Buchanan and Lorna Simpson (eds.), *Schizoanalysis and Art*, London, Bloomsbury, pp. 253-78. In this essay we also attempt a metamodelization of Guattari (specifically his four ontological functions) with the late Lacan's RSI knot (Lacan's sinthome is also allied with what we call a 'mytheme' that might function as kind of cohering device for an art practice). Many of the ideas that follow – on mythotechnesis specifically – were developed with Burrows and in the context of our collaborative art practice – or 'performative fiction' – *Plastique Fantastique* (see www.plastiquefantastique.org).

[39] See footnote 1.

indeed, follows a war of attrition against the human animal).[40] Badiou might be said to be on the side of accelerationism (if it makes sense to take sides) in so far as he affirms a subjective process that is alien to the human animal itself. That said, Badiou does, of course, offer a theory of the subject (this is at the core of his philosophical œuvre), and, as such, it might be argued that Badiou himself offers us the missing subject of accelerationism. Certainly Negarestani's labour of the inhuman has something in common with both Badiou's fidelity to an event (in *Being and Event*) and his 'Living for an Idea' (in *Logics of Worlds*) and Brassier, as we saw in the previous section of this essay, refers to Badiou when thinking about the relation between a renewed Prometheanism and a subject adequate and appropriate to this.

Could it be argued that what characterizes some aspects of more recent accelerationism – as opposed to something more Landian – is the replacement of Deleuze-Guattari (and especially the thesis of *Anti-Oedipus*) with Badiou, and, with this, a foregrounding of the formal (and of mathematizeable thought in general)? It has often been argued that Deleuze is the key interlocutor for Badiou, but, in relation to the matheme, I think it is really Guattari who is Badiou's opposite insofar as Guattari attends specifically to the affective (as well as being precisely a non-philosopher).[41] The basic philosophical-analytic schema looks something like this:



[40] Things are, of course, more complex and overdetermined than this, with a whole cast of philosophical precursors to accelerationism. Alongside Badiou, and in the distancing of Deleuze-Guattari, we might note, for example, for Negarestani, Wilfred Sellars and Robert Brandom; and for Brassier (as well as the previous) Thomas Metzinger and Paul and Patricia Chruchland (indeed, we might suggest that accelerationism is at least partly characterized, philosophically speaking, as a synthesis between continental and analytic traditions (and departs from Speculative Realism, in this respect – as well as from those Object-Orientated trajectories that constitute the other main philosophical offshoot from the former).

[41] For more on these distinctions see Chapter 3, 'The Aesthetic Paradigm: From the Folding of the Finite-Infinite Relation to Schizoanalytic Metamodelization (to Biopolitics) (Guattari)', and Chapter 4, 'The Strange Temporality of the Subject: Life In-between the Infinite and Finite (Deleuze contra Badiou)' of my *On the Production of Subjectivity: Five Diagrams of the Finite-Infinite Relation*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, pp. 89-124 and 125-168.

There is more to be said here, about two different trajectories of French thought, the animal (on the left) and the formal (on the right) – and both Brassier and Badiou have written on this. An especially interesting line of thought is Deleuze's difference to Lacan particularly around the idea of the unconscious.[42] Of particular note in the diagram is the figure of Spinoza as common root to both the philosophical and psychoanalytical categories, but also as purveyor of both the creaturely (affect) and the rational (reason), depending on what one reads of *The Ethics* and indeed *how* one reads it. We might map some of the accelerationist texts, in particular Negarestani and Brassier, between Badiou and Lacan (insofar as both are philosophical, but also attend to a kind of subject (albeit, a rational one) which means they have an psychoanalytic aspect (though, crucially, no account of an unconscious)). This very partial and reductive schema (which leaves out any analytic philosophical precursors) also allows a more pointed reflection on the differences between an accelerationism positioned on the right of the diagram (again, between Badiou and Lacan) with that on the left, between Deleuze and Guattari (where we might place Land and Ccru more generally). It also gestures, pace Spinoza, to a composite subject – between the right and left sides – and, more crucially, to what *different* composite subjects might look like.[43]

Art practice, it seems to me, can be involved in this kind of experimental and synthetic modeling. Again, this is not exactly a therapeutics (art practice does not have any kind of clinical responsibility in this sense). In fact, it is also, ultimately, not simply the production of subjectivity (at least when this is only narrowly construed), not least as it tends to produce something to be encountered by others. The essay I mentioned above – written with David Burrows – develops the idea of art practice as a holding pattern for points of collapse in this sense – maintaining only a minimum consistency, whilst also operating as a scene of rupture. Indeed, such practices are not *for* a human subject that is already in place, or, at least, they threaten to undo this subject. But certainly these practices offer up something – different models, diagrams, performances – different fictionings – for more experimental modes of being (or becoming) in and with the world (for a subjectivity to come perhaps?).

If reason and science are of the matheme, broadly construed, which is to say the Promethean impulse in its rational and technological form, then mythotechnesis might be a name for these practices that attend to a kind of vitalism alongside the more artificial constructs of the human, practices that involve an abstraction that is both formal and affective (or, to put this another way, mythotechnesis is a diagonal between the rational and the animal). Any accelerationism, it seems to me, will need

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[42] For a fine study of this area see Christian Kerslake's *Deleuze and the Unconscious*, London: Continuum, 2007.

[43] It seems to me that Mark Fisher's writings are pertinent here (see in particular those on his blog at http://k-punk.org (accessed 15 August 2015) – especially in their prescient call for new libidinal figures adequate and appropriate to a reanimated Left (could we position Fisher on a transversal between Deleuze and Lacan?).

to explore, and experiment with, this terrain – participate in the construction of its own kinds of mythotechnesis, its own kinds of images and fictions, assemblages and figures, so that it might have a transformative traction on the world, and especially on those who dwell within it.

If this mythotechnesis is part of what a 'radical political response to capitalism' might look like then these different synthetic forms of life will also need to express and capture our collective desires. They require, precisely, libidinal engineering – as well as our participation in this. This project of reclaiming and then deploying a new collective – optical, aural *and* libidinal – unconscious is the necessary accompaniment, it seems to me, to any focus on reason and rationality and operates as a corrective to any faith in technological development as itself the sole progenitor of new and different ways of being in the world.

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